

# The Most Wonderful Time On The Gifts We all Share

GVRA



GEORGIA VOCATIONAL  
REHABILITATION AGENCY

December 2017

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# A Holiday Wish

## The True Gift This Holiday Season

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This season, for many of us, is a time for family, friends, special events, and the giving and receiving of gifts. As we join in celebration, my message this month is simple. I hope each of you know I consider it a true gift to serve alongside you and be a part of this GVRA family. We are charged with a special mission.

Through our work, we have the honor of impacting other people's lives by playing a role along their path to employment and independence.

We understand that, tangibly speaking, our clients receive income, which in turn generates revenue that allows them to buy cars and homes, and funnel tax dollars back into the economy. But it is the intangibles that bring us to work every day. Your commitment helps people find the sense of identity and pride that comes from

contributing to the community and supporting themselves and their families. These benefits are both immeasurable and invaluable.

As we enjoy the season, I hope you will find peaceful moments to relax and focus on the things you most appreciate in life. My coworkers are on my list.

I wish each of you a joyful holiday.

Sean T. Casey  
Executive Director



# A Tour of the Campus

## GVRA Partner Sodexo Tours RWS

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Roosevelt Warm Springs recently served to showcase GVRA's career initiatives when the campus played host to a special guest from Sodexo, a GVRA hiring partner.

GVRA invited Sodexo's Director of Global Diversity Gloria Puentes to RWS after she first joined agency Communications and Marketing staff on October 10 to participate in a video showcasing Sodexo as GVRA's nominee and GRA's winner of the Employer of the Year Award.

The tour group, which included VR and RWS leaders, met first in Georgia Hall, where Mrs. Puentes presented an overview of Sodexo's diversity initiatives. The company, which is the world's sixth largest employer, works with organizations representing various populations who traditionally have been underrepresented or underemployed.

"We are so much better when we are diverse as companies," she said. "We commit to make our workforce look like the

communities where we are, and that means we bring everyone to the table."

Individuals with disabilities are one of those populations, and Sodexo works through the National Organization on Disabilities (NOD) to identify agencies, organizations and groups within each state to recruit qualified candidates. After the presentation, the group toured the academic campus and had an opportunity to see classrooms, including those that house RWS's robotics, 3D printing and high voltage certification programs.

"We offer certifications that meet what employers expect," said RWS Director Lee Brinkley Bryan. "Our students here train in various areas that are identified as high-demand professions by data-driven research. And for the past year, thanks to the hard work of our staff and also our students, right around 50 percent of our graduates have had full time employment by the time they completed the program."





# Knowledge is Power

## Bringing Disability Awareness to the VA

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By Rehabilitation Technologist Virginia "Gigi" Taylor

October 30 was an exciting day at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center. This was the day GVRA's assistive work technology team held an exhibit for Disability Awareness Month. The temperature was frigid but that didn't stop hundreds of people from streaming into the VA for medical services. We were fortunate to hold our exhibit in the Atrium. People passed us on their way in and out of the VA. And we had a crowd!

During setup before, the VA's engineering team helped me. They told me where to pull up my car and unload my equipment, and they provided carts and staff to tote things into the building. Dr. Tincie Lynch and Daryl Lewis had prepared white draped tables for me. They looked great! The engineering team secured power strips and ample extension cords. They even stayed to help me remove items from bins, set up things on tables and connect needed electricity for my assistive technology demonstrations.

Through the process they asked lots of questions, learned about items and agreed to be ambassadors for assistive technology. I started an ongoing slide presentation highlighting assistive technology, some history that impacts our perception of disabilities and ideas about disability etiquette.

At the table, I displayed large-key keyboards, tiny keyboards, hand held video magnifiers, an attachable wheelchair tray and a lock line cup holder that can be attached to a table or wheelchair base.

Tools for Life loaned several items for display including daily living items. Some of the more popular items that people picked up were key adaptors, medicine dispensers,

card holders, a non-slip dinnerware plate, a fishing rod & reel that can be managed with a single hand, a Livescribe, a digital recorder and other memory aids.

People were drawn in by the enticing smell of popcorn, but when they saw the gadgets and learned how they might assist people with and without limitations, many seemed to be spellbound. Conversations stirred about how assistive technology improved abilities for everyone.

We heard a lot of, "How can I get that?", "That would really help me", and "I have a friend that needs something like that." Soon speech language pathologists, occupational therapists and several doctors stopped by. They wanted to see what all of the chatter was about!

Our GVRA team worked seamlessly together. Team 26's Veterans Program Coordinator Denise Mills and Developmental Disabilities & Autism Coordinator Isha Williams were there. Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Margaret "Peggy" Comin was there to answer questions about Vocational Rehabilitation counseling.

And of course, we didn't let people leave without goodies. We handed out information about GVRA's services, along with bright GVRA cups, antibacterial sprays and magnet clips. We had a few GVRA badge holders for giveaways, and they were instant hits! AMAC provided cell phone chargers and pens.

All in all, it was a fabulous event all because of so many generous, nice, and dedicated people.





From left: Margaret "Peggy" Comin, Virginia "Gigi" Taylor, Tincie Lynch and Daryl Lewis in front of assistive work technology devices at the VA Medical Center in Atlanta.





# Get to Know a Legislator

## This Month We Feature Rep. William Boddie

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William K. Boddie, Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia and raised in South Fulton County. He graduated from Banneker High School in College Park in 1995.

After graduating high school, William attended Valdosta State University in where he graduated in 1999 with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice. He received his Juris Doctor from the Mercer Walter F. George School of Law in Macon in 2003 and has been licensed to practice law in the state since 2005.

He is the co-founder and managing partner of The Boddie McKnight Law Firm, LLC with offices in both Douglas and Fulton counties. He was elected into the House of Representatives in 2016 and represents the citizens of District 62, which includes portions of Douglas and Fulton counties.

William is actively involved in professional

organizations such as the Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (GACDL), the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association (GTLA) and the Cobb County Bar Association. He is also a member of the South Fulton Chamber of Commerce (SFCOC), the Douglas County Chamber of Commerce, the Douglas County Small Business Society, the City of Douglasville Housing Committee and the Douglas County Democratic Party. His community service through nonprofit organizations includes roles as an advisory council member and community liaison for the Fulton Leadership Academy (FLA) in East Point, an organizer and conference speaker for Let Us Make Men (LUMM) and an active member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. He has served as a faculty member for the Personal Development Academy of the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys (GABWA). He frequently serves as a guest lecturer and panelist at Universities around the state including Valdosta State University, Morehouse College, Columbus State University, Clark Atlanta University, and West Georgia University.

William is a well sought after legal analyst and has been featured in the Atlanta Journal Constitution, the Douglas County Sentinel, the Fulton County Daily Report, and Ebony Magazine. He has also been interviewed regarding high-profile cases and developing legal issues by FOX 5 News, 11Alive News, Channel 2 Action News, and dctv23 in Douglas County. William serves as a legal commentator and town hall speaker for V-103 and WAOK 1380 radio stations.

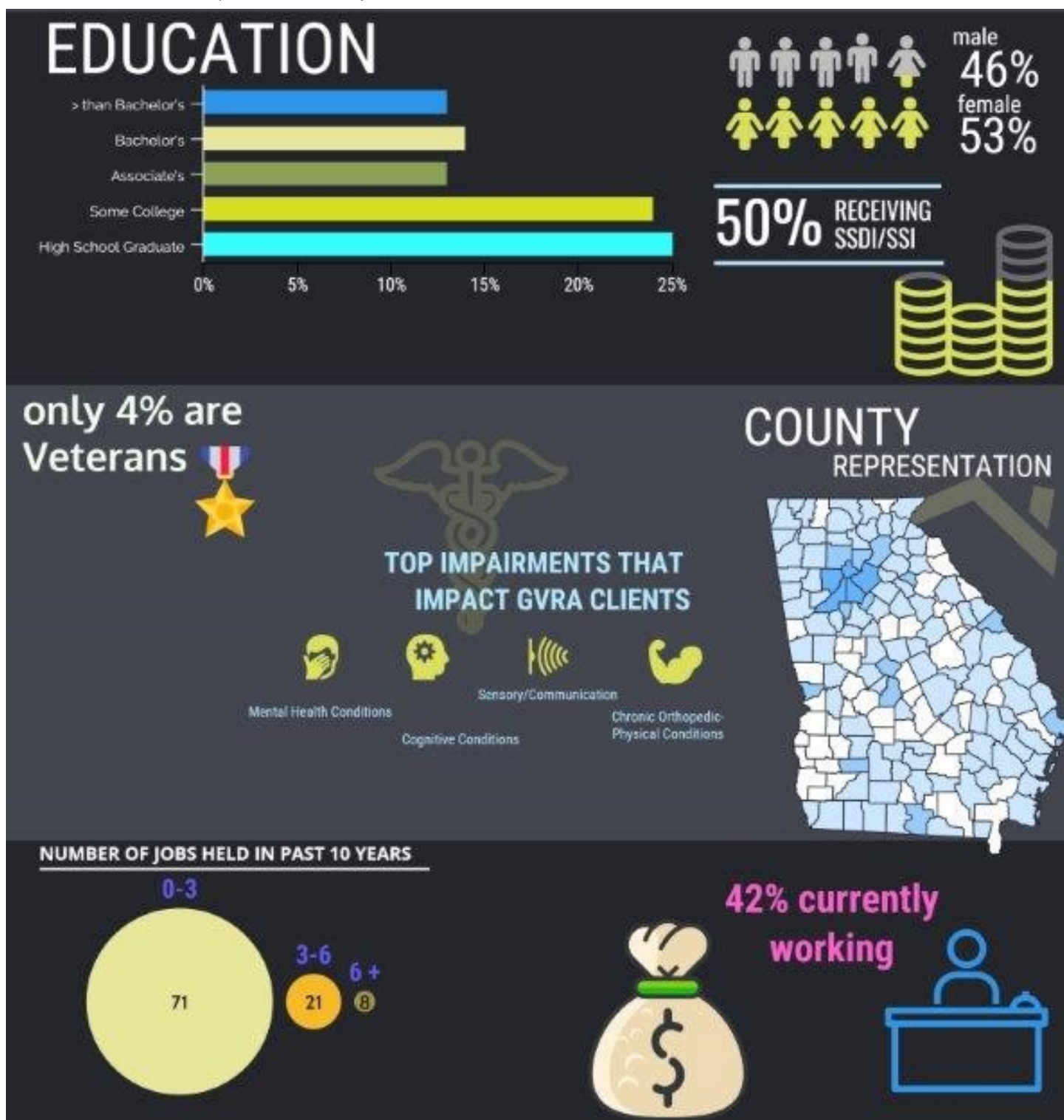
William is a life-long member of Antioch Baptist Church in North Atlanta.



# Customer Service Survey

## What Clients Think of the Services They Received

Once again, the University of Georgia's Institute on Human Development has conducted a customer satisfaction survey to gauge how GVRA clients see the services they received. Of the 9,060 surveys that were distributed either via email or by mail, 6,758 were delivered, with the individuals not choosing to opt out. 779 were returned, marking a response rate of 11.52 percent. Here's a little more about those individuals who completed a survey.



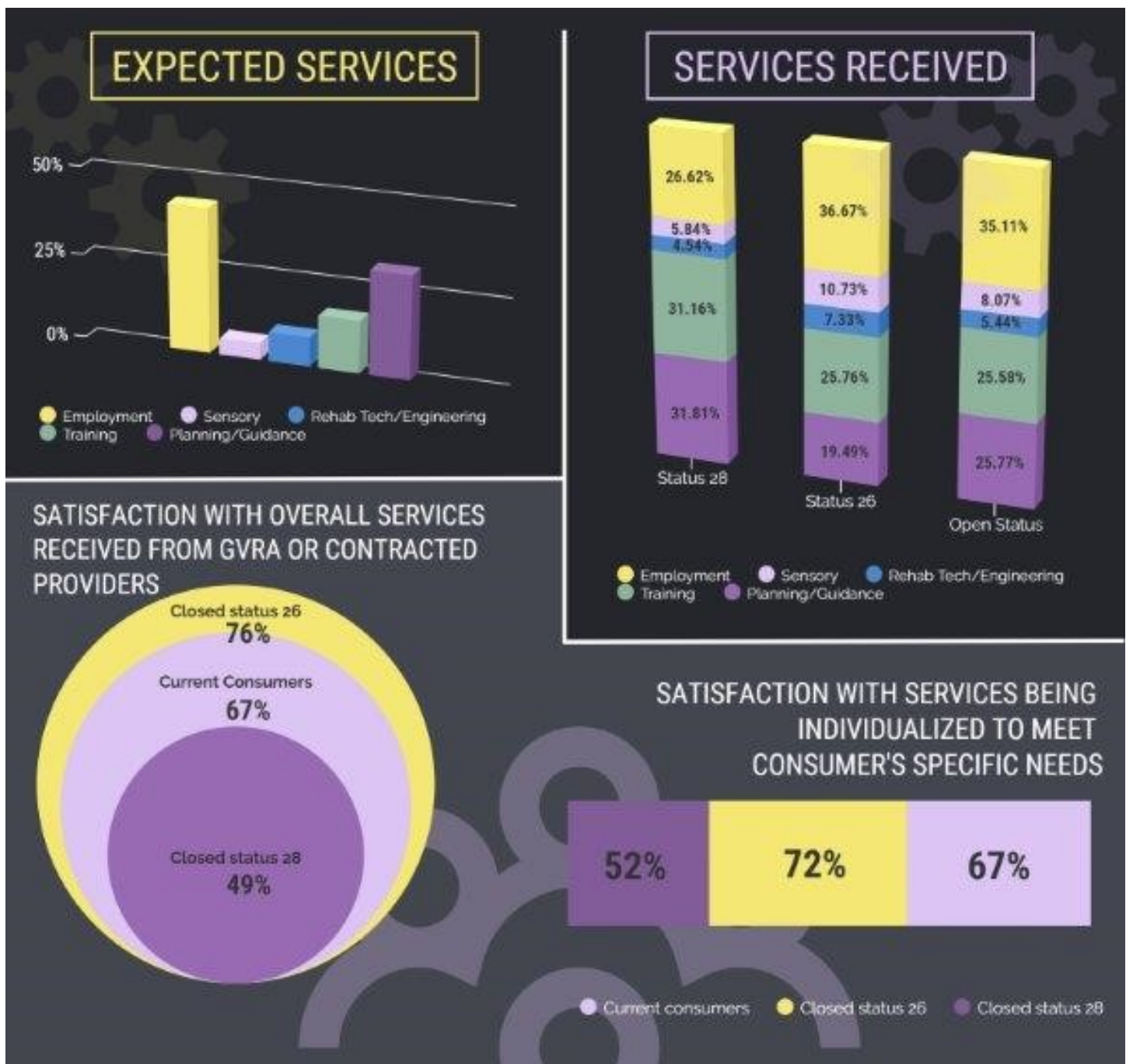


# Customer Service Survey

## Consumer Satisfaction with GVRA Experience

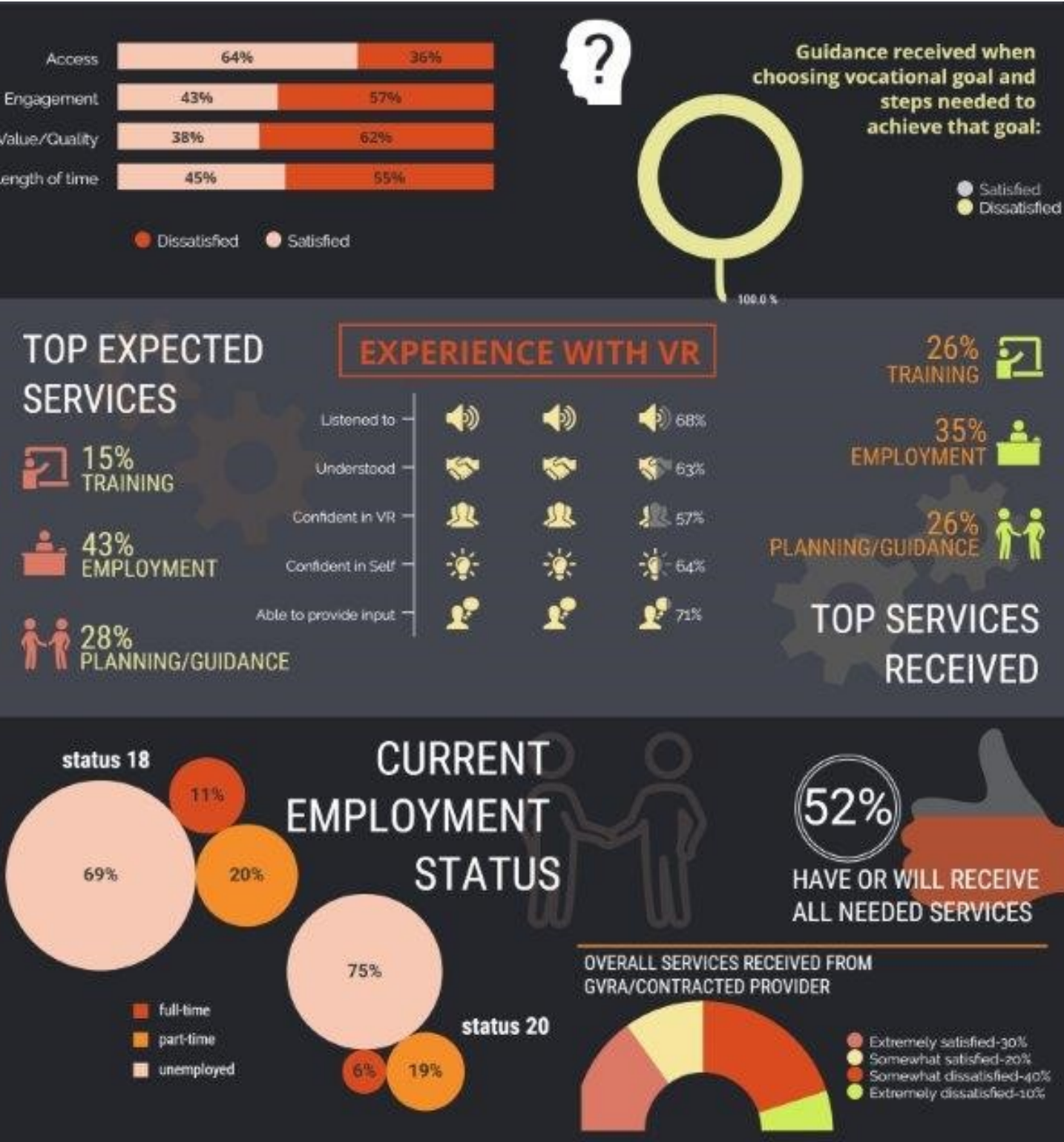
Survey questions were based on known practices that relate to positive outcomes, including the counselor-consumer relationship and the alliance that is formed between them to solve problems and obtain agreed-upon outcomes. In terms of strengths, 82 percent of survey participants were satisfied with the location of their appointments. 81 percent felt they were treated with respect, sensitivity and politeness, and 83 percent felt Vocational Rehabilitation staff was respectful of cultural considerations.

Of those with closed cases (Status 26), 80 percent or more felt that information was explained clearly.



The majority of those who found employment through GVRA services were satisfied with the job they had. 78 percent said that the job was consistent with their employment goal. 69 percent said the job met their financial needs. 76 percent were satisfied with the hours they worked. 75 percent said they had overall job satisfaction, and 66 percent said they had opportunities for advancement.

Following successful case closure, 70 percent of respondents said they were satisfied with the follow-up from their VR counselor, and 76 percent said that the services they received from GVRA improved their overall quality of life, a significant benchmark for success.





# GVRS Board Member Spotlight

## Featuring Diane Davis

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*Editor's Note: In this section, we'll be doing monthly profiles of each of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services board members.*



Davis is a retired regional director for the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. She is a certified rehabilitation counselor, health coach and personal trainer for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Davis is a member of Friends of Georgia State Parks and the Dougherty County Rotary Club. She volunteers for the Wilson Hospice House and the Albany Area YMCA. Davis earned a bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Georgia and a master's degree in Psychology from Valdosta State University. She resides in Albany.

"I strongly believe in the mission of the organization," she said.

## Calendar of Events

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*Every month, we include a calendar of upcoming events in this newsletter. If you have an event you'd like to be included, please send the name of the event, the date and the location to [john.boan@gvs.ga.gov](mailto:john.boan@gvs.ga.gov).*

Cave Spring Center Graduation  
December 15  
Cave Spring, GA

TASH Conference  
December 13-15  
Atlanta, GA

Certified Public Manager Program  
January/February 2018

Executive Leadership Development Program  
February-August 2018

GIB Christmas Luncheon With Santa  
December 19  
Bainbridge, GA

RWS Graduation  
December 21  
Warm Springs, GA



# A Business Decision

## Former Walgreen's VP Urges Inclusion

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GVRA VR Staff and staff with Georgia Tech's Excel Inclusion program were recently on hand for Randy Lewis Day at Georgia Tech.

Lewis, a former Walgreen's Senior Vice President and author of "No Greatness without Goodness: How a Father's Love Changed a Company and Sparked a Movement," has an adult son—Austin—who has autism, illuminating in his own life the need for disability inclusion in the workplace.

"Most people, when they are having a child, say they don't care what it is as long as it's healthy. So what is the worst thing? Some kind of disability? And lo and behold, I had my son and when he was three years old, he was diagnosed with autism. People will say, you're so noble. Noble? Hell, we didn't ask for this. That's not noble. My son didn't talk until he was ten. Today, he is 29, and he is trying to make up for lost time. He drives and works. We worry about what's going to happen to our child when we're not here. But... Austin drives and works. He has achieved more than we ever thought possible, when it comes to getting a job, 99% of people think, it's a good thing to do (hiring people with disabilities), if you can afford it. Walgreens only makes three cents profit on the dollar, so any hiring decision must also be a good business decision. And this is one of the best business decisions we've ever made."

Statistic: nearly 70 percent of individuals with disabilities and 95 percent of people with severe cognitive disabilities, like Austin, would never hold down a job.

As a Walgreen's executive, though, Lewis set a goal to ensure 10 percent of the workforce is made up of individuals with disabilities, and at some distribution centers, 40 to 50 percent of all employees are individuals with

disabilities.

Upon achieving this goal, overall productivity increased significantly.

Lewis quotes:

The Excel Program offered by the Georgia Institute of Technology is a four-year college program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) leading to two separate Certificates. The first is a Certificate in Academic Enrichment, Social Fluency and Career Exploration and the second is a Certificate in Social Growth, Leadership and Career Development. Excel provides a structured, supportive, and inclusive postsecondary educational opportunity and addresses the full scope of the needs of this population from fundamental academics to social activities and vocational preparation. The program activities are categorized under one or more categories: academics, social fluency, independent living, career exploration, and development. There are currently 28 students in two cohorts in the program.

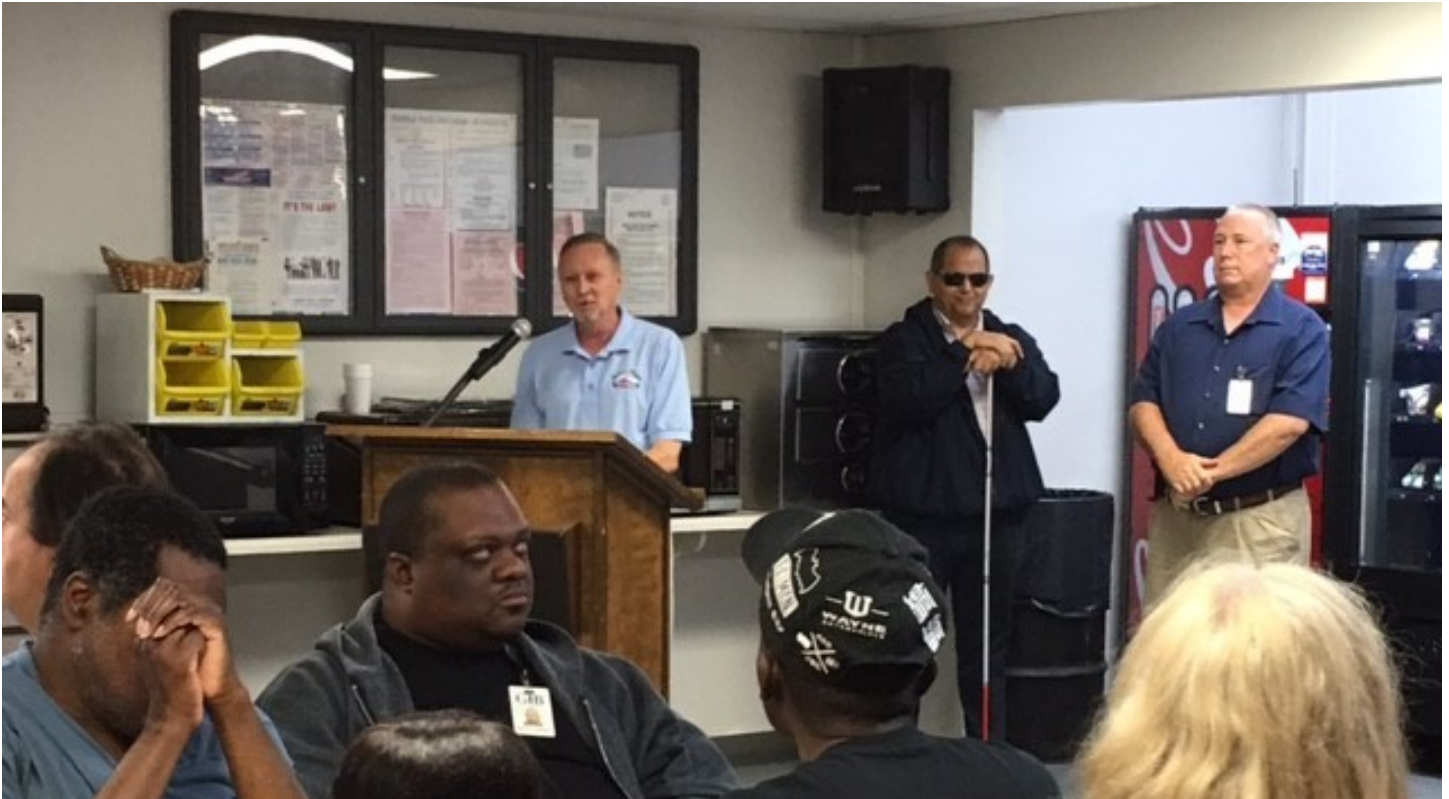




# GIB Celebrates Veterans

## There's Never a Wrong Way to Say Thank You

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On November 9, Georgia Industries for the Blind honored our veterans with a short program, with speakers praising those who have served in our nation's armed forces. In addition, those veterans who currently work at GIB were honored. Those include Lionel Thomas, Tom Henderson and Reggie Crosson.



# A VR Success Story

## The Power of Sticking With It

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By Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Sandra Pugh

Each day as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC), I am given the opportunity to work with clients who share their career desires and goals. Often times, these individuals find their way to me through numerous channels. Some of them walk into my office not knowing why they are there, and others have some general knowledge of what Vocational Rehabilitation is all about. Many will share their life stories, and I am amazed at the challenges that some have overcome. I realize in those moments that I am working with resilient individuals who are not going to settle for less than their best.

My job is to assist these people by obtaining their information, allowing them to express their goals and providing them with detailed information about our resources. On occasion, clients will come with mixed information about the services that our agency provides. Referrals from different sources will inform them that we have jobs waiting for them. That is when I have to explain that we don't have jobs waiting, but that we use our resources to locate appropriate employment and or training that will lead to employment in the individual's desired field of choice.

Along the way, a client will come in who is an open book, and they are more than happy to know that someone is going to help them become productive. Mr. Bradley Devor is one of those clients. From the first day that he stepped into my office, I found his story very interesting. He was a previous client with VR, but he had met some challenges with locating and maintaining employment.

Bradley had been adopted at a young age and has struggled with a learning disability since childhood. Employers had previously

been reluctant to hire Bradley, and he explained that on the rare occasion in the past when he had been hired, the job did not work out for a number of reasons.

After assessing his talents, it was determined that once he was placed in a position, a job coach would be beneficial. In addition, I wanted to ensure that when we found Bradley employment he would enjoy what he was doing, and that the work load would be appropriate for him. Collaboratively with Ms. Carroll, one of our Counselor Assistants, we secured a position at McDonalds in Cedartown for Bradley as the front line maintenance person. After taking advantage of job coaching, Bradley excelled in that position.

Ultimately, his case was closed successfully. One day not long after Bradley's case was closed I received a call from Bradley, and I could just hear the excitement in his voice. "Ms. Pugh, I wanted to call you and tell you that I got employee of the month." I was elated hearing this wonderful news, and I let him know that I was so proud of him. I told him that we were going to pass his story along so that other people could be encouraged by how he overcame his challenges to become successful.

Mr. Jamie Donaldson, Bradley's manager, had some very encouraging things to say about Bradley's work ethic. He said that Bradley is wonderful and one of his most dependable employees. Mr. Donaldson went on to say that Bradley has been promoted twice since becoming employed. I am so happy to have been a small part of Bradley's success. Bradley is a remarkable individual!





# The 2017 Leadership Summit

## On This Year's Successful Event

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This November marked the third-annual GVRA Leadership Summit, an event where agency managers sit down to discuss where they've been in the past year and what lies ahead.

The goal, said Deputy HR Director Michelle Raines was simple.

"My goal was to put together a diverse team from across the entire agency and to host an awesome, educational and unforgettable conference which would allow each team member to shine bright as the stars they are," she said. "It think we accomplished that."

The theme of this year's summit was "Live to Lead: Leaders Inspiring Visionary Excellence," and in addition to discussing agency

direction, Raines said, its aim was to help agency staff grow as leaders.

"Ultimately, leadership is about keeping your team focused on a goal and motivated to do their best to achieve it, especially when the stakes are high and the consequences really matter," she said. "We wanted to make sure we cultivate that kind of leadership."

Deputy Director Kevin Harris said that the summit served to move the agency forward, both in terms of practical application and also in terms of philosophy and culture.

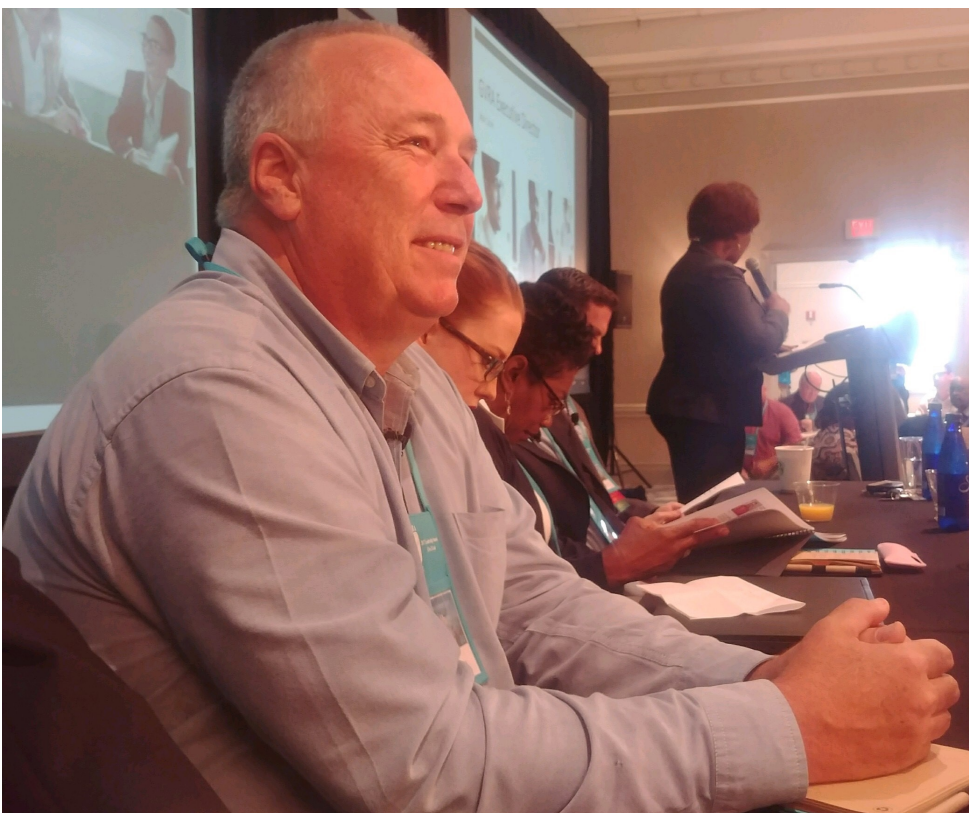
"Processes and systems are important to the survival and sustainability of any organization. This year's Leadership Summit was a vital component to the culture we are establishing and nurturing here at GVRA."







Here are pictures from GVRA's third-annual Leadership Summit. The event allowed agency managers to come together to strategize about how to best move forward.





# And the Award Goes To ...

## The 2017 Leadership Summit Award Winners

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Below are this year's award winners from the annual Leadership Summit.

**Service Star – Deborah Reid – Administration** – The Service Star Award recognizes outstanding internal customer service.

**Distinguished Service – Larry Price – Vocational Rehabilitation** – The Distinguished Service Award recognizes continuing and exceptional external customer service that is above and beyond.

**Creativity & Innovation – Susan Lloyd – Disability Adjudication Services** – The Creativity & Innovation Award recognizes ability to find creative solutions to complex challenges in order for continuous improvement.

**Perseverance – Shan Bostic – Vocational Rehabilitation** – The Perseverance Award recognizes steady persistence, commitment, pride and a positive attitude in completing a goal in spite of difficulties and obstacles.

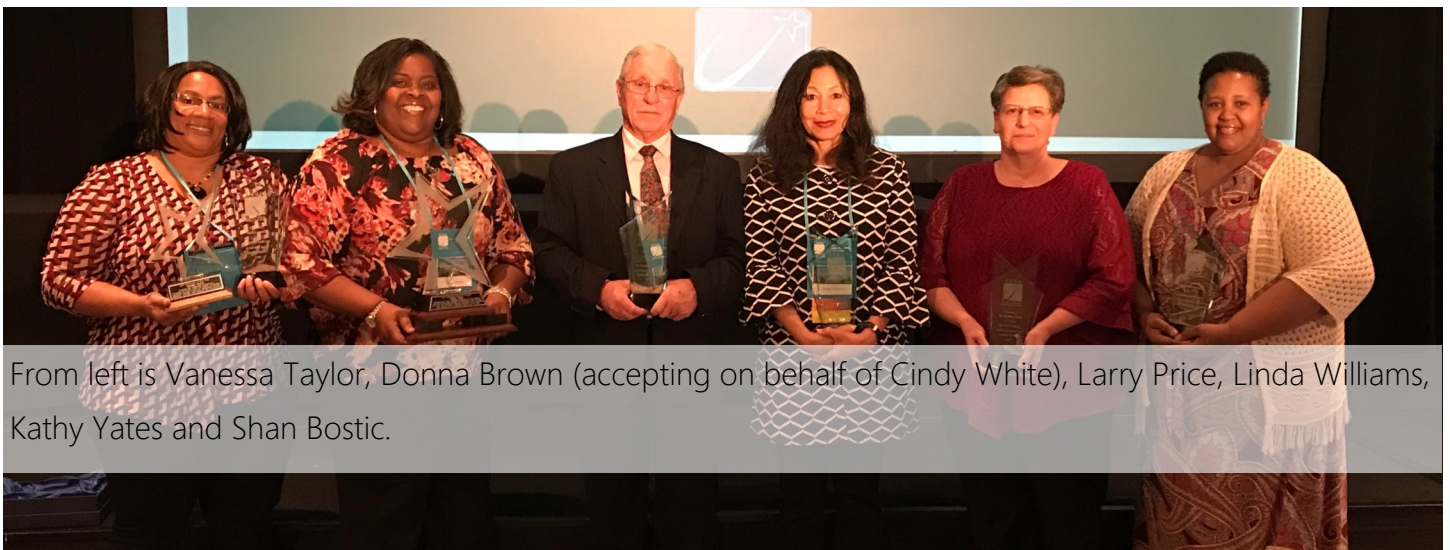
**Leadership – Kathy Yates – Roosevelt Warm Springs** – The Leadership Award recognizes the unique ability to guide and inspire others, which in turn contributes to the effective and

efficient functioning of GVRA.

**Rookie of the Year – Linda Williams – Administration** – The Rookie Award recognizes excellent and outstanding performance by a new GVRA staff member who has been a part of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency for a period of at least six months and no more than two years.

**Employee of the Year – Vanessa Taylor – Disability Adjudication Services** – The Employee of the Year Award Recognizes excellent and outstanding performance by a GVRA staff member. He/she is contributes significantly to GVRA through excellence, distinguished service, leadership, innovation and perseverance.

**Executive Director's Award – Cindy White – Disability Adjudication Services** – The Executive Director's Award recognizes any member of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency who continuously contributes to the effective vision, mission and delivery of the services throughout GVRA and the community. He/she embodies the spirit of GVRA.



From left is Vanessa Taylor, Donna Brown (accepting on behalf of Cindy White), Larry Price, Linda Williams, Kathy Yates and Shan Bostic.

# Happy Turkey Day

## Soldiers Ate Right at BEP site at Fort Benning

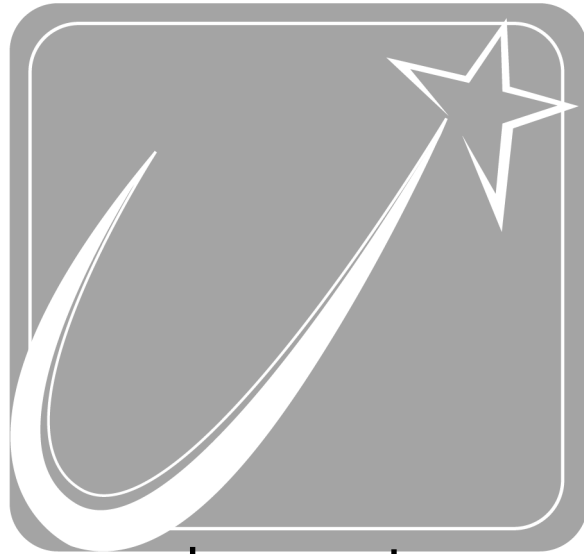
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The Fort Benning Dining Hall, managed by Blind Enterprise Program Manager Michael Lee, took out all the stops for a Thanksgiving feast for the soldiers housed there. Mr. Lee's twelve dining halls serve over 30,000 soldiers daily, which amounts to 10 million meals a year. In his 14 years as contract manager, he has served over 130 million meals.

That's something to be thankful for.







*Happy Holidays*  
*From GVR&A*

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